1. Sexual Life before Maturity

561 Like Europeans, the Pangwe divide the individual's life into
956 three sections, the period of childhood, that of adulthood, and that of old age. The last period, however, concerns the Negro much less than the first two periods of life, because on the average death occurs at an early age. Sexual maturity represents the boundary line between childhood and adulthood, and the Pangwe emphasizes it very much because sexuality is at the center of his religious conceptions and /252/ finds external expression through the initiation into the cults. This initiation corresponds to our confirmation. The Pangwe acts as though a person before sexual maturity -- for the sake of brevity I shall call this person a child (mǫ̃'ńgo III) -- represents a stage antecedent to actual manhood, mot III, just as, say, the caterpillar is the stage prior to the butterfly.

774 If we think back on what was said concerning the soul in the
836 discussion of religion /Ed., not translated/, we remember that
864 the Pangwe distinguish two kinds of people according to the kind
882 of soul they possess: bebĭ'n (uninitiated, good), and bongŭs (initiated, evil). Children (bǫ̃'ńgo) are bebĭ'n, uninitiated, good, because they do not know sexual intercourse and, if they have become acquainted with it prematurely, do not know that they are committing a sin; indeed, they could not know since, after all, they are not initiated into the profound connections between sexual intercourse, life, and death.

887 In reality the situation is such that the Pangwe young people
964 are perfectly well informed, but officially each one must emphasize that he is a child, mǫ̃'ńgo, that is, good, unknowing, uninitiated as to sexual intercourse, even when he has long outgrown not only the actually innocent childhood (in the narrower sense), but also the period of sexual maturity. This point can be tested on any Negro between the age of ten and 20 years by asking him whether he already practices sexual intercourse. The answer will always be the same, be he a Fang from the bush or a Jaunde long since glossed over by a bit of civilization: "ma ne mǫ̃'ńgo (I am
[672] a child, that is, innocent, I know nothing about sexual intercourse)."

177 764 Obviously this has now changed, but perhaps not so much as one would imagine: every year the courts are aware of several ordeals after a death, of mutilations of corpses which are really autopsies, of sums of money extorted which are customary compensation payments imposed on the "person responsible" for a death. And we may assume that in this connection three-quarters of the cases never reach the European courts. Funeral rites have, however, been lightened and colored by Christian influence, even when the deceased had remained to the end attached to the old beliefs: his wives or children usually call in a nkat foé (news-announcer = catechist) to say the prayers for the dead and to sing psalms or hymns. The old-fashioned cylindrical bark litter has been replaced by a European plank coffin, gradually even for women and children. The graves of the well-to-do have masonry walls and are covered with a concrete slab bearing name, date of death, and a pious text, or even with a small flower bed framed with bricks or bottle necks, with a grave stone or cross at the head. The dead man's hut is no longer destroyed, especially if made of "solid" material, nor are his personal effects broken. Often the body is washed and dressed in European clothes instead of being anointed with baa; the white shroud remains. In Christian families women take part in wakes for men and attend their burials; men attend the burials of women but rarely take part in their wakes. In [795] /104/ many villages the different /Christian/ sects have separate cemeteries.

765 177 Mourning is less rigorous and is often expressed by the European black arm band and tie worn by men. In the villages widows are still rather ill-treated (cf. above, pp. 128-129), but their sequestration has been reduced to a week, and they are allowed to wash after a month or two. Most of the prohibitions of the mourning period have fallen out of use, and the end of mourning is marked by a family gathering which has more about it of a certain kind of French provincial New Year's Eve party than of the old purificatory rites.

761 Death in the traditional concept is not so much the cessation of life as the dissociation of the personality. Enyiñ, life, comes from the verb nyiñ meaning "to survive" rather than "to be alive"; /thus life represents/ a kind of dynamism opposed to the static to, tabe = to be, exist, remain, etc.

826 774 The body, nyul or nyôl, is perishable and corruptible; it supports the other elements of the personality, above all the nsisim or nsisiñ,

826 the shadow or immaterial duplicate of the body. The heart and lungs,
● 774 nlem, are the seat of the intellect and sensibility, especially of the consciousness of good and evil, the seat of the moral and mental personality. It is by way of the nlem that a person's mind is struck, that, for instance, he is made mad; through their évur the beyem do di nlem, eat the nlem, of their victims. The nlem for a time survives death; the nsisim seems to be immortal. Breath, avebe (from vebe, to breathe, derived from vee = to be alive, alert) is characteristic of physiological life (1).

> 1. Among the Ewôndo, the breath, ewundu (Boulou, evunulu = wind) is characteristic of the human being, as is nsisim; animals are not provided with either, that is why they can be eaten. (J. B.)

Strength, tye, tyi, kie, or ki, is somehow external to the individual, independent of him, yet that which insures the cohesion of the elements of the personality. It seems to be particularly localized in the nlem (thoracic organs) and the boo, brain, which is evidently the seat of action (the verb bo = to do, to act), whence the importance
769 of skulls in the ancestral cult, biéti. Ngul, which may also be translated "strength," is more "capacity" or "power," the faculty of making use of tyi. It is impersonal, it pre-exists and survives the individual, who during his lifetime can waste or augment it; it is the basis for magic and sorcery, tyi being in itself neither good nor bad. Everything that exists possesses tyi, including the dead, but living beings possess more than inanimate beings, and men more than other living beings. Sacrifices and prohibitions revalue around this notion, as vocabulary well shows: étyi = prohibition, metyi = blood, atyi = egg, tyik = to cut, to kill, to command, etc., (cf. above p. 25). The dead keep a certain amount of strength, which makes them at the same time potentially dangerous and potentially usable.

557 A name, jôé, jui, also pre-exists and survives the person it distinguishes, whence the special ties between bemôé /105/, homonymns, and also the need to know a person's name in order to cast a spell upon him, etc. A dead man keeps his name until it is given to one

754 perform a sort of exorcism. Sorcerers seem to be convened to these
788 meetings by secret messages in the form of bundles of sticks notched
[211] according to a particular code, or in the form of the quipu. They
are believed to reach the meetings by levitation or by sending only
754 their nsisim while their bodies remain at home in a state of apparent
774 death. This offers a good chance of getting rid of the sorcerer by
burning his body, the disadvantage being that the nsisim survives, as
does the évu, and that they than can be incarnated in an animal,
which cannot happen if the sorcerer is burnt alive.

754 The évu may use various methods of moving about outside the
774 nnem's body. Sometimes he leaves it in an invisible and immaterial
825 form, but this method is exceptional. Most often he enters the body
of an animal, generally a leopard, but sometimes a black snake,
civet cat, gorilla, or chimpanzee, or even certain insects; the list
is unlimited, but nearly always the animal in question is powerful or
dangerous. The carrier-animal is then almost invulnerable, endowed
both with human intelligence and with the powers of an évu. It is,
however, possible to strike at it, with luck and good mebiañ, and any
injury to the évu rebounds on the sorcerer. On the other hand, injury
to a sorcerer during the évu's absence is not necessarily fatal to the
latter, because the évu can survive in the body of the vehicle-animal.
The latter is called nkuk (1), which can also mean "mask." It is

[787] 1. Among the Ewôndo, this term also denotes the good bekôn who appear in dreams to give advice to the living. (J.B.)

not clear whether there is a confusion /119/ with the élañela, as
Trilles suggests, or with animal-bekôn, or with those who are beyem
on their own account, or even with bingôngôt (bingungure).

754 There seems to exist alongside ngbwel a /kind of/ sorcery con-
nected with abé nlem or mbia nlem, malignity of the heart, and
having nothing to do with possession by the bivu. Thus practitioners of
kôn, which consists of killing a person while leaving his body alive
(see above, p. 134), would not necessarily be beyem in the strict
sense. Likewise, many malevolent activities are only criminal
deviations from permissible magic. Alliance with an animal, or in-
carnation in the body of an animal, or even the transformation of a
magician into an animal, need not be malevolent or only becomes so

754 the leaders who will be there, as each has his private mark.
575 That's all."
828
203 "But why are some pointed and others not?"

"Oh, that! No, that's a deep secret. If I were to tell you that I'd be punished by death at the next meeting."

[Pages 454-462 omitted. --Translator] [463]

[Two paragraphs omitted. --Translator]

791 All practitioners' societies recognize ritual sacrifice. In
754 many cases a human victim is slain and eaten. These sacrifices
575 are often characterized by what seems to us revolting cruelty and
782 horror. I shall have occasion to deal with this point more fully
266 when discussing sacrifice.

These are ritual sacrifices: immolation is not done for the pleasure of killing any more than consuming the victim is for the pleasure of eating human flesh. This is so much the case that a woman is never sacrificed: "Munga kĕ dzamadzam, kĕ kie ve
[562 nsissim: A woman is of no importance (from the sacrificial point
774] of view)," runs a Fan proverb, "She has no power over spirits because she has no soul."

At sorcerer's feasts, on the contrary, and in the societies they organize, men are eaten for the pleasure of eating human flesh.

754 According to all the Fan and all Africans, sorcerers leave their boeies in order to go and feed on the hearts of other men while asleep. Hence their name, bĕndzi bur, eaters of men. Sometimes they do this themselves, sometimes it is done by a spirit that possesses them. I willingly admit, of course, that there is nothing true in these accusations, at least as regards the way in which the sorcerers work. But one thing is undeniable, the fact of cannibalism.

[One paragraph omitted; p. 464 omitted. --Editor]

Chapter XIV

Totems of Sorcerers and of their Secret Societies

The Nagual and Nagualism

[Summary omitted--Translator] [466]

224 ditch, its point in the air, so that any animal falling in will almost certainly be pierced. Having finished with these preliminaries, the hunters make ready to actually beat for game. First there will have been a large sacrifice. Suppose a tribe has the scaly anteater (ye-mvil) for its totem. The tribal chief is the first to start on the hunt after a preparatory fast of three days. During that time he has remained apart in a small reed hut in the midst of the forest, eating only the food he brought with him, which he must first have placed on the évora biéri. He drinks only from an aromatic leaf folded into a cone; furthermore, he abstains from any relations with his wives, because contact with women is supposed at such times to be an offense against the totem (nsem éki). After these three days he makes a fetish, that is, a sacrifice to the tribal or clan totem, according to the usual practice; it consists of a goat at least or better a sheep. Formerly always and nowadays even occasionally, it was always a slave. After the sacrifice [555] the chief takes part of the victim -- the rest belongs to the practitioner -- and throughout the hunt, he must eat no other meat. He then leaves and returns to the village only when he has met with, captured alive if possible, or if not, slain, the totem animal. If he kills it he must take care that none of the animal's blood drips onto the path, thus risking being profaned, for that would be another ritual offense. Therefore the chief carefully closes the wound with dry leaves and the fluff from a banana tree.

[834] [782] [567]

While returning to the village the chief must be seen by no woman; he therefore takes care to announce his arrival by a special call, which is answered by a tom-tom, and then dashes into his hut. The women who happen to be in the village, outside their huts, must go inside quickly.

[201]

The totem animal is then placed on the évora biéri. If it is too large to fit, the chief opens it and puts on the évora the brains, lungs, and heart, the three parts which contain the life principle and the various souls. The carcass is offered in sacrifice in the accustomed manner and then divided among all the hunters.

[774]